

Judy Pedersen, PIO
E-mail: parkmail@fairfaxcounty.gov
Press Inquiries: 703-324-8662

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Park Authority Completes Salona Acquisition

The Fairfax County Board of Supervisors and the Park Authority Board have acquired a 41 -acre conservation easement and purchase options on the historic property known as "Salona." The proposed easement, outlined publicly at a press conference in October 2005, was finalized on December 28, 2005. The site, located at 1235 Dolley Madison Blvd. in McLean has frontage on Dolley Madison Blvd., Buchanan Street and Kurtz Road. The Salona homestead and grounds comprise 7.8 acres within the 52.4 acre site, and is already protected in perpetuity by a 1971 easement to the Board of Supervisors.

"This was an important property that was a perfect fit for a conservation easement," said Dranesville District Supervisor Joan DuBois. "I am very pleased that we were able to work cooperatively with the property owner and the Park Board, as well as other Supervisors who all recognized this unique opportunity to preserve the past and readily supported this acquisition."

Salona derives its name from the circa 1805 homestead associated with this site. Salona has significant cultural history of local, state and national importance that spans centuries. This was the home of Henry "Light Horse Harry" Lee, a Revolutionary War hero; it was to Salona that Dolley Madison fled in 1814 when British troops were burning the White House; and during the Civil War, Salona served as a part of the headquarters for the Union Army.

The conservation easement preserves one of the last sizeable open spaces in McLean. Within the new easement, 10 acres will be placed in active recreational use with the remainder used for passive recreation such as trails (providing a critical link to the Pimmit Run Trail system). The easement will also allow for preservation and interpretation of natural and cultural resources on the property. The easement prevents any residential construction on the property in perpetuity, and the Park Authority has the right of first refusal to own the Salona property outright. The cost of the conservation easement (\$16.1 M) is less than 1/2 of the appraised (highest and best use) value of the property. The Northern Virginia Conservation Trust has the role of easement enforcement, and collaborated on the acquisition of the easement.

The Park Authority proposes creating a local park to provide active and passive recreational opportunities and to preserve and interpret natural and cultural resources. Approximately 2/3 of the property consists of mature tree cover, which will be preserved. Potential recreational uses include two unlit rectangular fields, a picnic area with shelter, a playground, on-site paved parking for 100 vehicles, paved trail connections to existing streets and unpaved trails through woods and meadows. A dditional landscaping would be provided to serve as a buffer to neighbors and as appropriate, preservation and interpretation of natural and cultural resources would occur.

For more information about land acquisition contact the Park Authority Public Information Office at 703-324-8662.

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